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ABSTRACT

The 11 "themes" in this report describe the three-week study visit of 11 adult education workers from Northern England to Brazil. The report describes contacts with Brazilian colleagues in workers' and popular education and in related support services and trade and popular organizations they serve. "Organization of the Visit" (Victor Cadaxa) provides an overview. "Brazil 1985" (Derek Bodell, Victor Cadaxa) discusses the economy, the society, and the "new republic." The next three themes describe the three cities visited: "Sao Paulo" (Janet Hannah), "Recife" (Alison Harker), and "Rio de Janeiro" (Ilona Buchroth). Other sections of the report include "Trade Unions and Education" (Jeff Bridgford), "Community Education in Brazil" and "Community Organisations" (Dick Ellison), "Women in Popular Movements and Trade Unions" (Mary Lewis, Clare Brown), "Health and Safety at Work in Brazil" (Peter Williams), "The Church and Liberation Theology" (Alison Harker, Clare Brown), and "The Brazilian Miracle" (Geordie Murray). A summary of the visit and organizations visited is appended. (YLB)

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Latin American Study Group/Workers Educational Association, Northern District

Popular Education in Brazil

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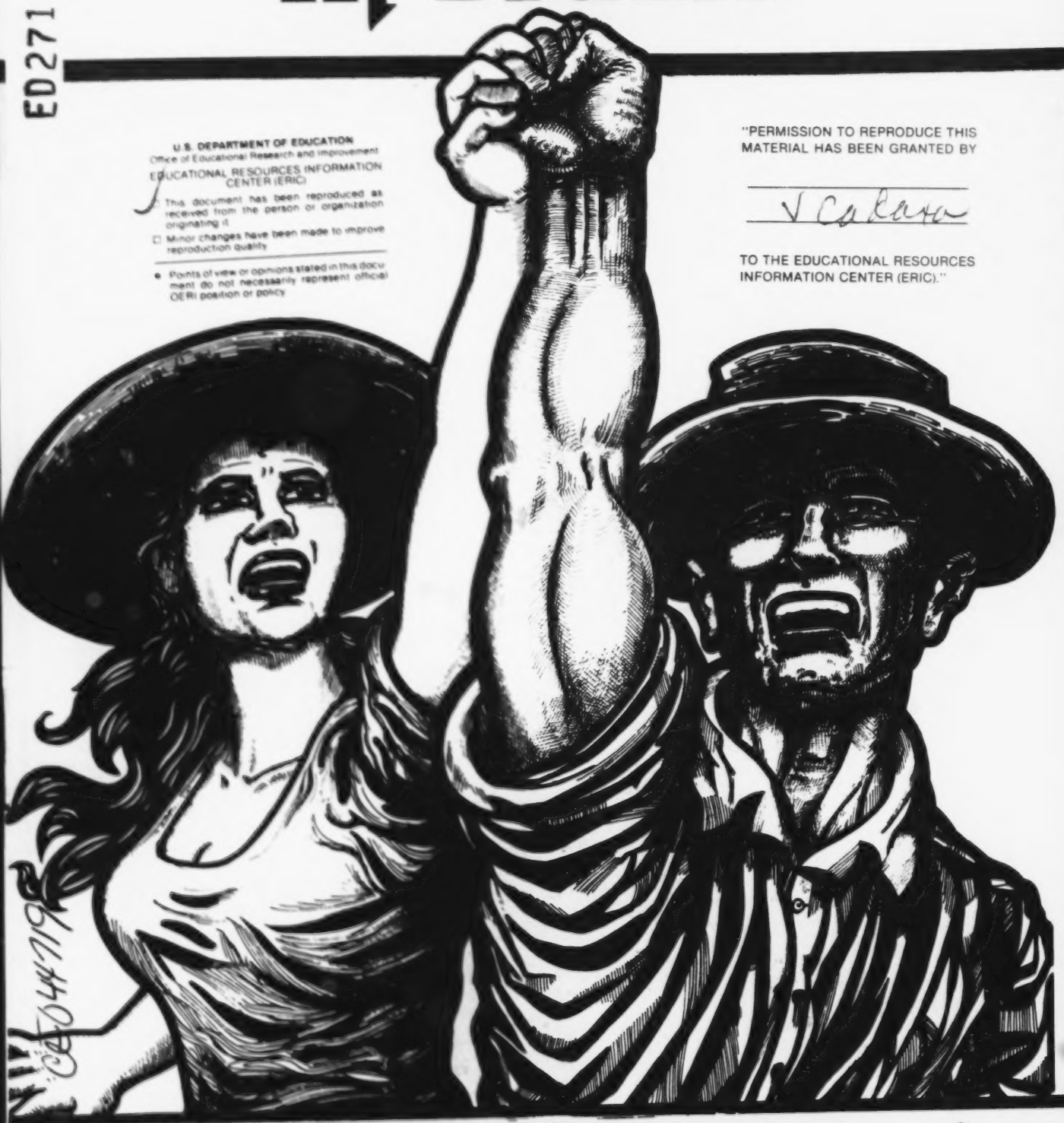

A report on the LASG/WEA 1985 study visit to Brazil

Latin America Study Group
Workers Educational Association Northern District

POPULAR EDUCATION IN BRAZIL

A report on the LASG/WEA 1985 study visit to Brazil

WE DEDICATE THIS REPORT:

1. TO BRAZILIAN WORKERS, IN THE COUNTRY AND THE CITIES

"It is Easter. Christ arises again in you, at work, in your suffering, in your love and in your courage to fight for a full and fair life.

From the blackboard at the Rural Workers' Trade Union Centre, Tabira, State of Pernambuco.

2. TO THE POPULAR AND WORKERS' EDUCATION MOVEMENT IN BRAZIL:

Belo porque tem do novo a surpesa e a alegria.
[Beautiful because it has the surprise and happiness of what's new.]

Ou (belo) como o caderno novo quando a gente o principia.[Or (beautiful) like a new notebook when you're just beginning to write.]

Belo porque corrompe com sangue novo a anemia.
[Beautiful because the new blood corrupts the old anemia.]

Infecciona a miseria com vida nova e sadia.
[It infects poverty with new and healthy life.]

Com oasis, o deserto, com ventos, a calmaria.
[The desert, with oases, the doldrums, with winds.]

From the poem "MORTE E VIDA SEVERINA" (A Christmas carol from Pernambuco) by Joao Cabral de Melo Neto

3. TO OUR FRIENDS, Chris Whitehouse, Andrew Couldridge, Lorenzo Zanetti, Sonia Carvalho, who co-ordinated our visits, and to the many others, whose commitment remains an inspiration to us all.

REPORT: LASG/WEA 1985 STUDY VISIT TO BRAZIL

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News of the late Brazilian President-elect Tancredo Neves' latest surgery attracts crowds in Rio.

11 adult education workers from Northern England took part in a 3 week study visit to Brazil, from 22nd March to 14th April 1985. Whether as volunteers or paid staff, we all provide educational opportunities for members of trade unions, co-operatives and community organisations, for women and unemployed people (list of participants in Appendix 1).

We visited the 3 largest cities, Sao Paulo, Recife and Rio de Janeiro, in the order of our arrival, staying for 1 week approximately in each, with some forays into the interior. Our main objective was to meet Brazilian colleagues in workers' and popular education, in related support services - advice, information, publications, research - and a selection of the trade unions and popular organisations they serve (summary of visit and organisations in Appendix 2). People familiar with Brazil may notice some omissions, even inconsistencies; they were due to pressures of time and to our very patchy knowledge prior to the visit - our requests certainly puzzled our Brazilian contacts, at times.

The visits is described through "themes" written by individuals in the group, as the multiplicity of visits, meetings and organisations cannot be adequately covered here. We hope this format will be more

interesting to people unacquainted with Brazil, and bring out better the main issues, comparisons and lessons learnt. A "dossier" of draft notes on visits and meetings has been compiled, available locally to those particularly interested.

In the report, we have tried to capture some of the energy, generosity and optimism we encountered in so many people in Brazil, and plan an eventual Portuguese-language translation as a small thank you to colleagues in Brazil, particularly those who arranged our accommodation and programme of visits. Thanks are equally due to the Latin America Study Group (Tyneside), to the WEA Northern District, South Yorkshire District and Assistant General Secretary, and to UNESCO's Adult Education Section. The account that follows explains how they all helped and advised, and we hope they will find some value in these pages.

We feel the visit was a success for the group as a whole, for each member individually, for our work and organisations. Above all, we think we've made some valuable international contacts and enabled others to co-operate in our follow-up work. We plan to reciprocate the help and comradeship received in a practical way, by sending 3 or 4 members from our group to collaborate with Brazilian colleagues over a few months in 1986, developing workers' education study materials. If successful, that will merit perhaps another report.....

The Editorial Committee:

Jeff Bridgford
Victor Cadaxa
Janet Hannah

ORGANISATION OF THE VISIT

Victor Cadaxa

Early in 1984, the Latin America Study Group on Tyneside conceived the ideas of a study circle on Brazil, committed to a long term programme of preparation, study visit and follow-on work. It was felt necessary to build awareness and direct links with workers and popular organisations in South America, to complement projects study and exchange visits with the Caribbean and Central America.

Brazil was the country chosen, because of existing contact and the continental importance of the rebirth of autonomous organisations there. A 3-member co-ordinating group laid the ground work: devising preliminary study programmes, advising contacts in Brazil of a possible visit and later searching for sources of finance for travel costs. To allow continued contact after any visit, it agreed to emphasise adult education as the major theme for the visit in selecting participants in Britain. Advised by Jack Taylor, WEA Assistant General Secretary (and Secretary of the International Federation of WEAs) it applied for UNESCO's 1984-85 travel grants for "leaders in workers' and co-operative education". Support came from the WEA Northern District, to which LASG is affiliated, and advice from the WEA South Yorkshire District/Derbyshire Miners Students Association, based on their UNESCO sponsored 1983 study visit to Spain.

Details of the proposed circle and study visit were circulated to LASG supporters and to all WEA Northern District Branches and member organisations. The catchment was kept to Northern England and deliberately tight, to enable effective joint work before and after the visit. Selecting 10 from 20 serious candidates proved the most difficult task. A system of points was devised which resulted in a group of 11, as 5 people shared an identical score at the end of the process. After considerable contact and some delays, the U.K. Commission for UNESCO in London endorsed the programme and the candidates. These proved acceptable to UNESCO, which granted money for the group's travel (subject to individual agreement to follow up reports).

Once constituted in November 1984, the study circle took overall responsibilities for the programme and for practical arrangements towards the visit. Details for courses on contemporary Brazil and Portuguese conversation were finalised; 2 people were made responsible for contacts and programme in each of the 3 centres to be visited; other took over responsibility for travel arrangements, collection of materials for Brazil, the 2 study courses, contact with UNESCO, WEA, etc. The courses and meetings were held over 4 months on Sundays, avoiding clashes with other commitments.

Attendance held up well, and the division of responsibilities proved its worth in speed and in familiarising the group with individuals and organisations in Brazil; once there, it allowed rotation and sharing of responsibilities. We tried to organise by ourselves the visit programmes and select organisations to be met, but rapidly discovered the insufficency of our contacts and knowledge. We had invaluable assistance from Sonia Carvalho (UNA-IS), Andrew Couldridge (Oxfam) Chris Whitehouse (CPV) and Lorenzo Zanetti (FASE), who broadened and strengthened our programmes. Andrew, Chris and Lorenzo obliged in arranging a final timetable, confirming details locally and acting as part-time guides and translators.

The large list of organisations and individuals we wanted to meet grew after our arrival, as expected. To cope with this, for most days we divided into 2 or 3 interest groups; in the evenings, regular joint meetings reviewed visits, compared experiences and planned ahead. One aspect of planning was "time off" for 1 or 2 people for part or the whole of each day, to avoid exhaustion.

Meetings and visits were conceived as a dialogue stressing reciprocity, to avoid "educational tourism". After a brief introduction to individuals and organisations, we explored and assesed our respective goals, achievements and failures. Discussion of work strategies, methodology and materials permitted valuable exchanges; we concluded where possible with plans for

contact and future collaboration. Reciprocity was ensured by our Brazilian colleagues' open and frank attitudes, and by their positive internationalist outlook. We sought to leave some physical record of our passage, from trade union badges to study materials, and how valuable these proved to be. Our omissions in gathering materials for Brazil became obvious: in particular we hadn't enough trade union education materials (we were well supplied only on Health and Safety) and women's courses material (for all voluntary organisations).

Since our return, we've been meeting fortnightly on average, co-ordinating local talks on Brazil, correspondence, articles, brief descriptions of visits for a "dossier", and this report. We are planning a major "Brazil Festa" in September 1985, and a return (work) visit between New Year and Easter 1986, for 3 or 4 of us to collaborate on new trade union education materials. Popular and trade union education in Brazil - we're inspired by it and by the wish for international co-operation.

THE ECONOMY

Derek Bodell and
Victor Cadaxa

"Uns com tanto, outros tantos com algum, mas a maioria sem nenhum"
(A few have lots, a few more have some, but the majority has none)
- Samba Verse

A severe economic recession coupled with social elation and a popular President daily on the verge of death provided a contradictory background to our visit. The country was emerging from 20 years of military dictatorship, the economy beset by the problems of the financial adventurism of that period. The people were enjoying their newly-acquired freedom, organisations the advantages of free association under the "New Republic".

The legacy of military rule between 1964 and 1984 is largely negative. Industrial growth, and with it the status of 9th or 10th largest economy in the world, was reached at a high cost for most Brazilians and with a massive debt which now affects the livelihood of all citizens.

The dynamic consumer market was achieved by allowing a minority of the population a disproportionate amount of the country's resources. While the economy grew rapidly disparities in wealth and income grew, both between better off and poorer social classes and between more and less favoured regions of the country. Most new investments went to the Southern portion of the country, notably the "Golden Triangle" states of Minas Gerias, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.

The military's goal was to make Brazil a great economic power by the end of the 20th Century, following a capitalist model. The ultra-fast growth required depended on massive investment, from both domestic and foreign sources. The gamble was that if Brazil could grow significantly faster than developed countries, with much higher profit rates, it could soak up foreign capital through direct investment and public borrowing, to produce yet further growth. Repayment of

interest rates would be no problem, multinationals' need to re-invest would curtail re-export of capital.

In practice this means capitalism almost unfettered by social consideration, overheads or taxes, with the bulk of government investment in the infrastructure and energy sector.

For a while, the new deal worked. From the mid 1960's to the mid 1970's the Brazilians economy grew at accelerated rates of 10% or more per year, with massive inflows of foreign loans and investment. Government experts created structures and incentives for export of manufactures, managed to contain inflation, and through "indexation" made saving and investment possible. Higher income earners paid low taxes, "freeing" them to save, invest and consume at a frantic rate.

The process was undermined from 1974 with oil price rises. Brazil was vulnerable, with only small domestic production, but particularly because road transport had been given absoulute priority and private passenger vehicles constituted the largest new industrial sector. For a while the consequences were masked: until 1979 the economy appeared to grow, based on a major export drive, below-inflation wage rises, import-substitution, and plentiful loans. Brazil appeared one of the very best prospects to Western Bankers for unloading their excess of petro-dollars, and their readiness to lend underpinned official growth rates.

The unilateral hike in U.S.A. interest rates after 1979 could not be contained. The economy slowed down, stagnated and went into recession. Desperate export drives and the programme for alcohol-driven passenger cars were all successful, but not enough, and foreign capital flowed out as massivly as it once flowed in. Much of the debt was tied in mega-projects dear to the military mind such as the malfunctioning atomic energy programme and the Itaipu hydroelectric dam - certainly "the largest in the world" ... but also scarcely

required. Unable to meet in full the interest payments on foreign debts, these rose rapidly, and today they stand over U$ 100 Billion dollars with a similarly large internal debt.

The economic legacy of military rule is that Brazil now subsidises the standard of living of the developed capitalist world. Brazil will not be a great power by the year 2000 and most of its people will still be poor.

THE SOCIETY

Brazil in 1985 was a predominantly industrial, urbanised country, marked by extremes of inequality and beset by deep social problems. In the 20 years of military rule the population had nearly doubled to around 130 million, the majority of them under21 years of age. Perhaps 75% of the population lived in towns and cities, half of them in conurbations of half a millionor more.

Economic growth had benefitted most Brazilians only little, in many cases at a high social cost. Industry and finance, the motors of growth, were modelled on (or subsidaries of) the developed countries and their capital-intensive structures. The white collar and semi skilled jobs created were not sufficient for a rapidly growing population, much of which was previously under-employed or seasonally unemployed.

The regime rejected any major role in income redistribution, social justice or welfare, believing that standards of living of the poor would improve through modernisation, new job opportunities, or small business, and through rapid growth in all incomes. This policy of laisser-faire towards society meant systematic welfare responses only in extreme instances of social need (e.g. droughts), a low level of social investment and, perhaps worst of all, little or no social planning. Economic growth was allowed to concentrate in a few urban "development poles", to which the population gravitated.

The two largest conurbations seem, to the outsider, excessively large: the Greater Sao Paulo with some 15 million, the Greater Rio with over 10 million. Worse, Brazilian cities have become 3-tier societies, with housing and amenities determined almost entirely by market forces. For the upper and middle classes, good housing in salubrious areas and modern facilities; for the lower middle class and skilled workers, poor housing often in bleak areas, with inadequate facilities; for the unskilled, underemployed and unemployed, slums and shanties with no running water or sanitation (in a tropical country!) in remote, polluted and /or dangerous sites. Recent migrants from the countryside struggle for even this. Far from being 'marginal' or a temporary phenomenon, slums and shanties are the permanent home of most urban workers and unemployed today.

A study commissioned by the Archdiocese of Sao Paulo, published as "Sao Paulo;Growth and Poverty", documented the worsening social situation in South America's business and industrial capital in the 1970s. Real wages had declined for most workers after 1964, incomes were upheld only by massive overtime. Standards of housing, nutrition and health were declining, with contagious diseases, undernourishment and related problems on the increase. Also deteriorating was the quality of life in the absence of urban planning controls, through increases noise, pollution and travelling time to work, while the attendant stress and psychological disorders increased.

Mass migration to the urban centre reflected the bleak existence in the countryside more than the often-mentioned unrealistic hopes of rural dwellers. Agricultural wages are mostly extremely low; tenant farmers face unfair, often informal agreements; squatters face harassment and organised violence; underemployment and seasonal unemployment affect millions. Public and private investment in rural communities has traditionally lagged far behind that in the main urban centres, resulting in lack of support, infrastructure, facilities and amenities for the rural population. When modernisation of agriculture came in the 1960s and 1970s it was concentrated on

the larger properties. As these became more market (or export) oriented, more mechanised and/or adopted new crops, labourers and tenants were shed, many small or marginal farmers bought out, joining the million or so migrating to the cities each year in a cash-oriented rural economy, casual labour contracts increased, with daily or weekly engagement replacing longer arrangements as the norm.

Social problems got markedly worse from the late 1970s. Social investment almost ceased and unemployment rocketed ; the government cut food subsidies and squeezed incomes (through below-inflation rises) in an effort to meet foreign debt repayments. Increased agricultural exports and the alcohol-for-petrol programme meant a major extension of mechanised one-crop latifundia, resulting in unemployment and increased prices for dwindling food supplies. This was coupled with lower support prices for food, produced mainly by small farms.

Unemployment, poverty and social squalor expressed itself through increased personal and family breakdowns, increased drugs abuse and crime. Unable to make ends meet, poor urban families were forced to make their teenage children fend for themselves. Personal insecurity and danger of robbery were added to the minuses of urban living as a minor instance, 3 of our group were robbed by a young teenager on a bus in broad daylight, in a well-frequented area of Rio

In the absence of concerted government action, informal arrangements, voluntary and Church-based organisations attempted to meet the acute needs of the neighbourhoods. In the larger workplaces, support networks emerged to take up demands not met by the state-controlled union structures. A widespread sense of popular grievance developed in the face of deep social inequalities, and the refusal to relieve the worst problems from the country's large resources. As Governments' resolve faltered after 1974, resulting in less repression and an eventually political "opening", grievances began to be expressed, timidly at first. After the success of the mass unofficial metalworkers'

strikes in the Greater Sao Paulo in 1978, grassroots and popular organisations grew bolder. By the time of our arrival, they were mostly still small and obviously unable to meet the great social grievances. But for the first time Brazilian society was throwing up a myriad of voluntary organisations independent from the atate or political patronage. Some are small, some are mass organisations, most are growing fast; lack of resources and optimism provide the keynote for many free associations in Brazil today.

STATE
RIO/1985: STRIKERS' MARCH, BRAZIL'S LARGEST STEEL PLANT VOLTA REDONDA

On arrival in Brazil, we were immediately overwhelmed by bad news concerning the President-elect, Tancredo Neves. He collapsed only hours before his formal inauguration, never to leave hospital again, and daily, sometimes hourly bulletins on his struggle to live accompanied our steps. Public and personal consternation and fervent wishes for the President's recovery were deep and openly displayed. A lot of hopes were placed on this 70-year old reformist politician, expressing at times conflicting traditions and experiences.

Commonly shared was a consensus for far-reaching change, and pleasure in recovering democratic freedoms at long last amongst the millions of Brazilians who had participated in the campaign for the return of democracy. Mass demonstrations for direct presidential elections had attracted over a million people in Rio de Janeiro, a million and a half in Sao Paulo. Though in the end Tancredo was indirectly elected, his project for a "New Republic" expressed this will for change, and popular feeling was that their pressure and mass movements had forced a reluctant Congress to elect a reformer. It was their President, their government, their democratic "New Republic".

Other attitudes diverged: many still placed all hopes on this one man, in the longstanding near-messianic Brazilian political tradition. Those emboldened by participation in democracy campaigns, popular movements or trade unions saw a real chance to achieve change, but primarily through their own efforts, to be aided or legitimised by government. A minority of the population was not so elated. Elements on the right worried about the possible scope and certainly the pace of change.

On the left, some saw a danger of a "new deal" that was merely to rescue through amelioration, a profoundly undemocratic society.

Certainly, Brazilian society has never been fully democratic, a deep legacy of slavery which persisted until 1888, and large landowners' continued domination till 1930. Even then, until recently landowners' control was almost absolute in the countryside, enforced if necessary by force - their own armed gangs or, for major challenges, those of friendly local or State authorities.

Politics and social change were tightly controlled under the Presidency, then dictatorship, of Getulio Vargas from 1930 to 45. Vargas' edifice of corporatist social control still persisted in the main, through the democratic interlude of 1945-64 and the military dictatorship, to 1985. All public associations were required to register, or else were illegal (and their promoters subject to severe sanctions). The state defined the "national interest", according to which it drew up a legal framework tightly controlling them; moreover, by tying them to particular governments gave itself wide powers of intervention. This control was complemented by censorship, punitive legislation and a political police during the Vargas' dictatorship, 1936-45, and refined by the military in 1964-84 by wide suspension of civic rights, a host of legal devices and several competing secret police forces.

This control did not just affect trade unions and pressure groups, but also neighbourhood associations, even samba schools! They would have to register, submit their constitutions, be limited in combining with similar organisations; during dictatorships, meetings, socials, even songs - not to mention publications - would be controlled. Not only were organisations controlled, they were stifled by the state's dead hand: many became empty shells controlled by a small pliant group; others died or simply remained informal, risking illegality.

Tancredo's "New Republic" offered the chance to change all that. Personal and political liberties were to be reinstated and in some cases extended. For the first time social freedoms were to be recognised, enabling mass associations of all kinds to be free and uncensored. As a first step, during our stay the government voluntarily gave up some of its remaining rights of "intervention" in trade unions and other voluntary organisations. The recognition of social rights extended to land ownership: there was the promise at least of a thorough

land reform, and this possibility was being taken up vigorously by rurual trade unions, (and equally, resisted by landowners). In the popular movements, urban and rural, the first demands for a truly comprehensive health and social security system gathered force.

Will these hopes for social justice be realised, will the country change? There certainly is a conservative majority in Congress (despite the changed political labels), and Tancredo's death has robbed reformers of a powerful leader. More ominous, landowners were said to be arming themselves and hiring more gunmen; harassment of trade union and squatters' leaders agitating for land reform was on the increase - inevitably including arson and murder. Yet, the social problems are immense, the popular will for change very clear: there is the overwhelming problem of debt, U$ 13 Billion to be paid to foreign creditors in 1985 alone. All of these problems demand change and some will occur, but the hopes of poor Brazilians can probably be met only in part, or hardly at all, while they continue to subsidise the world's richer economies.

SAO PAULO

Hey - comrades of Avon, don't be left out, join the Union

SAO PAULO

Janet Hannah

On arrival at Sao Paulo's Guarulhos airport, our group was met by Chris Whitehouse of Centro Pastoral Vergueiro (CPV), who proved to be an invaluable co-ordinator of our visit to the city.

Our first impressions of Sao Paulo altered little during our stay. It is a huge, sprawling, congested city where the polluted atmosphere stings the eyes and clings to clothes. Referred to as "the engine that drives the locomotive of Brazil", evidence of the city's rapid,. largely unplanned expansion is clearly visible.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Overcrowding and soaring land values have created a massive housing problem: every spare piece of land seems to contain a favela (shanty town). Many families sheltered themselves and their few possessions under the city's motorway flyovers, highlighting the sharp contrast between the money invested in the city's (private) transport infrastructure and the squalid conditions in which many of its inhabitants are forced to live.

On the second day of our visit, we visited a favela situated on the outskirts of the city. Local residents displayed to us the intolerable conditions in which they lived, without runnning water and basic sanitation. Conditions were rife for the rapid spread of disease and outbreaks of dysentery, tubercolosis and other poverty-related diseases were commonplace. Such was the overcrowding that shacks had been built along the banks of a heavily polluted stream; heavy rain soon saturated these flimsy constructions. Shortly before our visit, banks and shacks along this stream had collapsed, drowning two babies and leaving several families homeless.

During the visit, we learned tnat most of the occupants of this favela had come from rural areas in the neighbouring state of Minas Gerais. Attracted by the prospect of high wages in the city, rural workers from all over Brazil (particularly the North East) flock to Sao Paulo only to find that well-paid employment and decent housing is rare.

But the residents of this favela were fighting back! They had developed sophisticated organisation, building themselves a community centre, successfully resisting eviction and winning the important concession of street lighting from the local authority. Better-off inhabitants were gradually reconstructing their shacks in bricks and mortar, thus gaining more legal rights to tenure.

Although it was largely the female inhabitants who had fought over the years for their recent achievements, their leadership role had recently been removed from them by the men. Machismo in Brazil remains a major barrier to the achievement of genuine social equality!

In general, however, only a small number of favelas have an organised voice demanding the basic human right of adequate shelter free from squalor and disease. Those which are organised desperately lack resources and rely heavily on various research organisations which provide support and advice. Several of the research organisations visited during our stay provided an essential service to these and other campaigning groups. CEDAC (the Centre for Community Action) works with tenants' organisations, encouraging local democratic control, autonomous from State and other organisations. Similarly, the CPV lays its resources at the disposal of tenants' groups as well as Trade Union and other popular organisations. FASE, a national workers' educational organisation with offices in thirteen regions, has a worker in Sao Paulo with special responsibility for community education. He is heavily involved in community-based literacy programmes which are proving very successful.

TRADE UNIONS AND THE COMMUNITY

In contrast with Britain, there exists in Brazil a working alliance between community groups, Trade Unions and research organisations. They often work closely together offering moral and practical support for one another's struggles. The Chemical Workers' Union of the "ABCD" area had, for example, chosen a secretary on the strength of her community activity, more than her secretarial skills.

Most of the union buildings we visited resembled local community centres offering medical and dental services, as well as being union headquarters.

This is a legacy from the Brazilian State's effort, through legislation in the 1930s, to incorporate Trade Unions by assigning them a social welfare function. Until the "abertura" of the late 1970s, when the military began to loosen its grip, the unions were largely controlled by "pelegos" (Government-approved, often corrupt) who were content to play along with the role expected of them by the military. Genuine grassroots union opposition was not tolerated: many union activists were tortured, even killed, during this shameful period, and human rights were ruthlessly violated.

At the time of our visit, unions could still be "intervened" by the Ministry of Labour if the latter considered the union to be acting "against the national interest". Every union we visited during our stay in Sao Paulo had experienced "intervention" during the last few years. Several union leaders had been banned for life from holding union office.

One of those banned leaders is presently international secretary of the newly-formed "combative" Trade Union Confederation, the Centra Unica dos Trabalhadores (CUT). An ex- Volkswagen worker, he explained to us the intolerable conditions which had prompted Volkswagen union leaders in Germany to support their Brazilian colleagues' struggle against inhumane management practices. Similar international links were being forged between unions at Ford: one Trade Unionist informed us of his forthcoming trip to represent Brazilian workers at the Ford World Union Congress. But such examples of international union organisation challenging sophisticated multinational corporations remain few. We were reminded of this fact during our visit to the Sao Bernardo Metalworkers' Union.

After a meeting with the leaders of this large Union, we were led upstairs to meet a group of workers who wished to speak to us. Gathered in a large hall were approximately seventy union members who worked for British subsidiaries operating in the area. They informed us of their pay and conditions of work, then asked us questions about their companies' operations in Britain. Was it true, as management had informed them, that British wages were lower than theirs? Was there really no union organisation within their British factories?

We learned that one of the major union demands is for a forty hour week. A fifty hour week is standard within Sao Paulo industry and overtime is regularly worked. Skilled workers for a Surrey-based multi-

national corporation were earning U $ 200 - 300 a month, unskilled workers earned half or less. They considered themselves well-paid by Brazilian standards.

In addition to the lower wage rates, European and American multi-nationals operating in Brazil have other "benefits". Compared to North America and Western Europe, Brazil has fewer regulations restricting the use of materials and establishing the standard of working conditions. Health and safety is, however, beginning to emerge as a major issue. The Chemical Workers' Union of the "ABCD" region is at the forefront of the health and safety campaign. Providing much assistance and technical expertise is DIESAT, an inter-union organisation concerned with research into health and safety issues. This is surely an area in which there is great potential for international collaboration. British Trade Unions are still very much in the process of developing their expertise in this area, but there is a great deal of information presently at their disposal which could be passed on to Trade Unions in less-developed countries.

The transport workers in the Greater Sao Paulo area (and indeed in all Brazilian cities), have a health and safety problem of a different nature - violence against staff. Every day, between fifteen and twenty robberies are carried out on buses in Sao Paulo and between the months of March and June 1983 sixtythree workers were killed during armed robberies in this city alone. Again, the Brazilian transport workers were keen to establish contact with those abroad, not least in Britain where many cities have developed more effective security systems.

CONCLUSIONS

Our group left Sao Paulo after a very intensive and informative week. We departed with the image of a city of extreme inequality. It is the business centre of South America and one of the largest cities in the world, with one of the highest concentrations of industry anywhere. But perhaps more than anything else, we will always remember the courage, selflessness and determination of the people we met in their fight for basic human rights and social justice.

Despite the enormity of the task they faced and their occasional setbacks, as well as successes, they were determined to continue their struggle. Their approach is perhaps neatly summarised in the words of one young woman on strike from a large multinational cosmetics company:

"You can crush a flower, but that
won't stop the arrival of spring".

RECIFE

Alison Harker

After a stormy flight from Sao Paulo we landed in Recife to be met by three of the team from Oxfam's Field Office. The warmth of the welcome was matched only by the high temperature which also greeted us.

LOCATION AND HISTORY

Recife stands about 8m above sea level in Pernambuco in the North East of Brazil. In the first half of the sixteenth century the success of the North East Portuguese settlement laid the foundations for the Portuguese American Empire. Recife which was established in 1584 was one of the cornerstones of the Empire. Its prosperity was built on sugar cane and the coastal plantations were owned by the Portuguese, financed by the Dutch and the English, and work imported negro slaves. This area provided most of the world's supply of sugar cane till 1700.

The planters built beautfil houses and town centres with their

surplus wealth and established the beginning of a cultural heritage. So flourishing was the region that the Dutch seized it in order to control the sugar trade. Between 1630 - 1654 most of the North East coastline was under Dutch control and some local family names and houses still show this influence

PRESENT DAY RECIFE

Recife is now the third largest city in Brazil. It is a port on the Atlantic near the easternmost point of Brazil's northern bulge. It has a harbour protected on the east by a reef and breakwater. It has good road, rail, and air connections with the rest of the country.

The chief crops in the surrounding area are sugar and cotton which are shipped to Recife for processing and export. Just North of Recife is the beautiful historic town of Olinda.

The City is divided by waterways, into several districts. The three main ones are:

(a) Recife; i.e. the reef, lying on a peninsula. This is the commerical area where the docks are situated.

(b) Santo Antonio; an island between the peninsula and the mainland. This is where the Government buildings are located and the two oldest churches in the city. This was originally the port of Olinda and is now a suburb.

(c) Boa Vista; this is on the mainland and is a mainly residential area. It is where the educational institutions are situated. The three districts are connected by bridges which cross the two rivers, the Capibaribe and the Beberibe, which separate the different areas.

There are still clear architectural signs of the Portuguese influence in Recife and much evidence of it once having been an extremely elegant city. This is particularly so in the older parts of the town and in Olinda where some restoration schemes give a good indication of how the city must have once looked. There are still signs of immense personal wealth with some magnificant private houses. In strong contrast are the favelas where poor people live in shanty dwellings but also some of the large bleak housing estates being built in the suburbs. Those we visited are intended to rehouse the people living in favelas near the sea front, an area which is due

the type of enviroment being created is questionable.

POPULATION

Over the last 100 years the population has increased five fold. Droughts in the dry sertao areas have meant large numbers of people moving into the city regularly. Many are illiterate, have been used to working in agriculture and find it difficult to exist in the city. So it is clear that many people are homeless and survive by begging or making money by whatever other means possible. In 1980 the census returns showed a population of 2,400,000 inhabitants. The majority are racially mixed or European in origin, but "pure" African and also American Indian descendants are represented. The result is, on the one hand, a distintive cultural composition to the area which reflects the ethnic mix, but on the other hand it is clear that the darker the skin colour the more people are oppressed and suffer prejudice - which has a variety of expressions.

Many people in Recife and the surrounding areas are very poor even though the city has led in the limited prosperity of North East Brazil. The city has expanded rapidly and many industries have been promoted in the peripheral areas. However there are still high numbers of people who have to beg and who are homeless despite the building programme which is underway.

ADMINISTRATION

Recife is governed by a Mayor and a Chamber of Councillors. However, the Government of Pernambuco which has its seat in Recife has executive, legislative and judicial powers for the state.

The security of the city is maintained by the Police but the State military police and some armed forces are based in Recife We were certainly aware of a strong military presence. Several military bases have been located near the industrial zone which has been designated a strategic area.

IMPRESSIONS

Recife contrasts strongly with Sao Paulo where we had spent the first week of the trip. Far less industrialised than Sao Paulo, there was a feeling of space in Recife which had been missing from the southern city. Perhaps this was because of the proximity of wide expanses of rural land and because of its position on the Atlantic. The clear signs of poverty were immediately apparent on a larger scale than it had appeared in Sao Paulo. Many more people were openly begging. There seemed a high proportion of handicapped people and children begging, and it was not unusual to see children asking for leftover food from restaurants.

The type of organisations we visited in Recife were also in contrast to those we had visited in Sao Paulo. Naturally those in Recife were in the main more focussed on rural workers and their situations and the problems associated with poverty, violence, high rates of illiteracy, corruption and, in the Interior, the vast distances between people which hampered the organisational possibilities. We did, however, visit organisations which worked with urban groups such as the construction workers and we visited two organisations engaged specifically in work with women in the city. We also met the Secretary of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops. It was only in Recife that we visited organisations working on women's issues. It was also the only occasion when we had direct contact with the Church though it was clear throughout the tour that the Church plays a major part in work with trade unions and the popular movement. This was made clear during two of the visits into the Interior when the activities of the Church in working with poor people on the issues which oppressed them and their stand on agarian reform greatly impressed us. Perhaps this was even more remarkable to a group from Britain, where, with certain notable exceptions the Church adopts a rather different stance in relation to the poor and oppressed and where, in the main, Liberation Theology is regarded with suspicion rather than a basis upon which people build their lives.

One of the overwhelming impressions which we gained from the period in Recife was of outstanding courage in the face of enormous odds on the part of many people we met. People who were involved in trade union organisation in the rural areas were frequently exposed to acute physical danger. There was a high level of violence from landowners, construction owners, and sugar cane owners. This was directed at the workers themselves and at those who tried to help them whether by advising them of their rights or by encouraging them to take some control over their own lives. The violence often went alongside corrupt practices, for example, some group members visited a trade union which had been systematically cheated for years by its own employees. We were told of a woman trade union leader known to many of the people we met who had been murdered by the landowners' hired assassins. In addition to these physical dangers people had suffered the effects of five years of drought and a year of floods, so far yet another season crops has failed.

We were also impressed by the methodologies used by the organisations we visited. Far from being deterred by the high level of illiteracy among workers and the problems this raises in terms of organising, it seemed that illiteracy presented a challenge to be overcome. So we saw imaginative use of audio visual material, use of alternative radio and we met many poor people who may have been illiterate but whose articulateness and preparedness and ability to speak in public was quite humbling.

We also became aware of a high degree of political awareness among the groups we met. This underlined for many of us the difference between groups in the Brazilian North East and groups in the North East of England. For some of the study group who are accustomed to working in England with very small groups of people it was over-whelming to see the commitment of substantial numbers of people who for example attended meetings on a Sunday straight after church and enthusiastically greeted visitors from England.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the shortest part of the Study Tour, the time in Recife was important because of the contrast with the other areas we visited and because, in overall terms, it was so much poorer than the other two cities. Particularly significant for the group members were the visits to the Interior and the fishing village at Itapissuma. The experience of these had a lasting effect on the group members, and Oxfam is to be thanked for providing these opportunities as well as for arranging the rest of the Recife programme.

PERNAMBUCO 1985

LIFE IN A SMALL RURAL TOWN

RIO DE JANEIRO

Ilona Buchroth

By the time our group arrived in Rio de Janeiro, the final stage of our visit to Brazil, we were quite used to seeing the stark contrasts between astonishing wealth and acute poverty. However, Rio seemed to emphasise these contrasts in a particularly striking way.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Rio's expansion is restricted geographically by the mountains and the sea and therefore shows the difference in living conditions side by side. Migration is the cause of the great increase in population, which concentrates on the Rio State Lowlands and the Western Zone as well as the favelas in the State capital. The latter can be seen sprawling up the hills, providing the background for extravagant housing, wide streets, expensive shops and numerous signs of an enormous amount of public spending.

The population of Rio State is divided into 92% who earn 57% of personal incomes versus the 8% who earn the remaining 43%. This high level of concentration of incomes means that of the 92% almost 60% do not reach an income of more than four minimum wages (less than £120 a month) a major part of which has to be spent on transport. Even this extremely low income can only be reached by the additiional income of female and child labour, the various forms of which we had ample opportunity to witness.

Living conditions in the favelas are simply appalling, getting worse the poorer the population becomes. In the Western Zone (Zona Oeste) and the Rio State Lowlands (Baixada Fluminense) houses are lacking the most basic equipment and services. In the Faixada Fluminense for instance, more than half of all the houses have no running water and only approximately 8% are connected to sewers. When the group visited a favela in Sao Joao de Meriti, we were not surprised to learn that tubercolosis and other poverty related diseases were a

Major problem affecting large parts of the population, especially children. Working class housing conditions are determined entirely by free market forces, which also largely determine the State housing sector. Favelas and squatters' neighbourhoods therefore form the only possible alternative.

POPULAR EDUCATION

The issues of landlessness and homelessness are therefore central to the work of popular education organisations whose work with popular movements is primarily based on neighbourhood campaigns and community organisations which we had the opportunity to visit. As mentioned above, favelas in general do not have any infrastructure, since the people living there (approximately 2 million in the Greater Rio) do not legally exist. In addition the land has often been sold without the appropriate legal procedures. As an initial step one popular education organisation brought in two lawyers specifically to deal with the land right question. The main principle being, that groups should organise and be treated collectively rather than offering help for individual cases. Once groups are organised, an effort is made to forge links between organisations so that pressure for improvements can be exerted collectively.

Although the struggle to improve living conditions is an educating process in itself, popular movements see education for workers as a central issue. In Sao Joao de Meriti for instance, the residents' association, having already achieved some improvements in terms of housing, are at present opening a school which will also serve as a "community college". Popular education organisations are supported by a variety of service organisations supplying resources, materials and offering courses at grassroots level. As a whole these organisations lack adequate means, have no secure funding, and are staffed mainly by volunteers, often after a full day's (or night's) work.

In contrast to these organisations working on a shoestring, we had the opportunity to visit the official adult literacy organisation. Literacy is still a major problem in Brazil and especially acute in rural areas. The official literacy organisation is extremely well funded (they receive 2% of the corporation tax of all the major industries) and equally well staffed: there are 1000 paid workers in the headquarters, another 1000 in the 28 local agencies, 1000 fieldworkers plus 1000's of volunteers. Despite their claims, their grassroots involvement and impact is minimal and much of their financial resources are swallowed by the administration and salaries of this essentially top-heavy organisation.

WORKERS' EDUCATION

As much as bad living conditions are the basis for popular education work, trade union activities and education are based on the incredibly bad working conditions! Apart from the problem of low pay and often absolutely no job security, Brazil has the highest recorded rate of accidents at work, a problem that is particularly acute in the more backward and least organised industries. For instance in the civil construction industry, 12,000 people were killed and another 100,000 permanently incapacitated for work in the 1970's alone. Given that these are the official figures it is clear that the actual situation is far worse. It is estimated that for every officially registered accident, nine more occur. Much of the trade union education work is therefore concentrated on the construction industry which, with 350,000 workers, is the largest employer in the State of Rio.

As a visit to the President Vargas Steel Works in Volta Redonda revealed, trade union officials recognised the fact that they were only just beginning to acknowledge the need for a greater awareness of health and safety matters, and health and safety committees have only recently been established.

At the shipyards in Niteroi, where approximately three deaths per month occurred between 1980 and 1982 (with a situation far worse for the sub-contractors), there are safety committees elected by and from the work-force. The management, however, does not publicise the elections, so that the committees are not representative.

CONCLUSIONS

We left Rio, and with that Brazil, deeply affected by what we had the opportunity to see:

The close working relationship between community organisations, Trade U nions, and adult education and research organisations, a relationship generally absent in Britain, set an example from which we can learn a great deal.

Despite extremely poor physical conditions, people involved in community organisations demonstrated a clear desire for social change, with an optimism and drive that impressed particularly the community workers in the group on numerous occasions.

Although we could be inspired by the commitment we found in the Trade Unions, we nevertheless could and should offer assistance in terms of trade union education. Trade union courses on health and safety at work could be particularly beneficial, since this work is still in its infancy despite the high rate of accidents at work in Brazil.

RIO 1985

WASHING FACILITIES IN A HILLSIDE "FAVELA"

TRADE UNIONS AND EDUCATION

Jeff Bridgford

This section of the report will examine trade unions educatiion in Brazil. It is perhaps worth placing this subject into the wider context of Brazilian trade unionism. Trade unions have traditionally been relatively weak, and this for socio-economic, legal and political reasons.

Firstly, a high level of unemployment or under-employment, approximately one third of the working population according to one estimate, has made it possible to undermine the ability of trade unions to influence the labour market greatly. This state of affairs has been exacerbated by the arrival of barely literate or illiterate peasants who have been prepared to work for lower wages, as have been children. Industrialisation and urbanisation are recent phenomena in Brazil and as such a working class culture sympathetic to the collective solution of common problems has been slow to evolve.

The legal framework of industrial relations in Brazil, transposed from Fascist Italy in the early 1940's has likewise had a negative impact on the free development of trade unions. They were to act as organs of collaboration with the government and other associations to further social solidarity, and were to subordinate economic and professional interests to the national interest. Indeed, if any trade union creates obstacles to government economic policy, the Ministry of Labour can take over its administration and dismiss its elected officials. The Ministry of Labour also has had the right to determine the way in which trade unions spend their money - for welfare purposes and not for such items as strike funds. Strikes have been invariably illegal in fact, either because they have been called in an 'essential' industry, as defined by the Ministry of Labour, or because they have been called before all the complex bureaucratic procedures of conciliation and arbitration have been exhausted.

Finally, on a political level, trade unions have suffered at the hands of the military leadership. Progressive trade union activists have been persecuted, exiled or even assassinated, whilst conservative leaders have been supported.

These socio-economic, legal and political features have combined to produce a trade union movement, which tainted by corruption and weak numerically, has acted primarily as a welfare agency for a minority rather than as a bold representative of the working classes. However, change has come, albeit gradually. It was at its most visible in the industrial zones around Sao Paulo; the ABCD, where hundreds of thousands of workers are employed in numerous engineering firms such as Volkswagen and Ford. A series of strikes broke out at the end of the 1970's and at the beginning of the 1980's. Indeed a whole new era of militancy was born. Why this should happen at this particular moment is unclear. Perhaps it resulted from a confluence of factors - the charisma of the leader of the Metalworkers Union of Sao Bernardo, the collective dissatisfaction with galloping inflation and plummeting living standards, impatience with a military dictatorship, which bereft of solutions to economic problems was steadily losing favour even with its erstwhile supporters.

As a result of political divisions that prevented a single national trade union confederation being established, in August 1983 the first national trade union confederation was set up by the radical unions on their own, Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (CUT) in defiance of legislation prohibiting unions from different industrial sectors combining together. Shortly afterwards CONCLAT, a rival to CUT was set up by a coalition of other tendencies. Although similar in terms of stated policies, CUT is more radical in practice, more active and more insistent on grassroots involvement.

It is CUT's insistence on grassroots activism which has drawn attention to the need for trade union education. During the period of military dictatorship, activism had been discouraged by the

government and the trade union leaders themselves. Now there is no pool of well trained, well-informed activists to draw on, a situation exacerbated by the generally poor level of literacy prevalent throughout the whole country.

Trade union education in Brazil is undertaken outside the formal trade union structure by specialist organisations which are few in number. The level of financing is very low indeed and tends to come for the most part from foreign sources, trade unions or development agencies. As a result, even in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo there are only a handful of full-time educators, some part-time but numerous volunteers. Lack of finance is responsible for working strategies; the needs are so great and resources so stretched that education is only offered to workers in a few industries in each major city.

What are the aims of trade union education? In the long term, education is seen as an agent of change leading to the establishment of a socialist society. In the medium term, there is a need to create workplace organisation and where it exists already to reinforce it. In the short term, there is a glaring need for trade union cadres, all the more so since some have become organisers within left wing parties, in particular the newly established Workers Party (PT), itself an emanation of the trade union movement. The chemical industry in Sao Paulo with 40,000 employees in 400 different firms provides a good example. Although CUT representatives have been elected to the executive of the union, effective leadership can only exist if there are direct links to the shopfloor provided by intermediate cadres within the union structure, which are for the moment lacking.

What means were made available for encouraging recruitment? Short evening courses were offered, but there was no take up. A number of reasons could be suggested for this apparent lack of interest; courses take place in workers' own time which is at a premium given

the length of the working week and the distance travelled to work; perhaps equally as important is the lack of working class culture already mentioned, the lack of perceived need to organise. So it was decided to offer weekend courses which were partly devoted to trade union education purposes but also to leisure. This approach has been more successful and 10% of these participants have even passed on to a supplementary course.

What form do these weekend courses take? They are divided into six stages: (1) the participants introduce themselves, (2) they explain the problems encountered at work, (3) they discuss the origins and causes of these problems, (4) they discuss the importance of their industry, (5) they suggest solutions, (6) they evaluate the course. From a pedagogical point of view it is worth noting the importance of a methodology which emphasises learning not teaching, social intercourse not just receptive skills, and the experiences of the participants themselves.

Other courses introduce trade unionists to labour history as well as practical skills, how to organise, how to negotiate, how to speak in public, how to prepare leaflets.

Finally, it must be stressed that we were inspired by the commitment of those involved in trade union education in Brazil. Faced with overwhelming odds, they have worked tirelessly. Their funds are low, their resources are few and we, trade unionists in Western Europe, have a duty to support them.

S. Paulo 1985
Avon Cosmetics
Pickets

COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN BRAZIL

Dick Ellison

To many people the works of Paulo Freire are their only connection with Adult/Community Education in Brazil. Much discussion in the U.K. has centred around Freirean techniques etc. I think it is not unfair to say that what he wrote about in 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' and 'Cultural Action for Freedom', et al has often been read with interest (and difficulty by many of us), but has not been accepted by the broad band of people active in Adult/Community Education. What I wanted to know in Brazil was how had his work there twenty years ago been taken on, had it changed? Was it still important, had military repression prevented any real development? Eight years ago when I briefly visited two favelas (shanty towns) in Rio, I had been impressed by the organisation and motivation of the people in the groups but my visit was too fleeting to have any real impression of what process was really being used.

Having visited some 25 to 30 organisations, trade unions, community groups, community/social action organisations, basic literacy groups, etc., it is impossible to give a full impression of the rich texture of all their work.

Orientation towards a different culture is always difficult in the first few days so it was very reassuring when in the first couple of visits we started to hear recognisable phrases, 'Our work is Education for Liberation', 'Education as Liberation process', 'The process must affect the product, therefore there must be an equal participator base and a sharing caring basis'. But it is important to say that these points were only made after many of us questioned the basis of the courses/education being talked about.

We were hearing about basic economic and political theory being taught in favelas using community associations as a vehicle for contact, and similarly with trade unions in the work place. Nothing was said about process, when we questioned the answer was always the same and this was true for the whole of our visit. There was also a great surprise at being questioned, because 'we always start from where people are geographically, politically, emotionally, financially and organisation-

ally. This is irrespective of the nature of the subject being discussed, the topic being taught, one of the activists involved at one group turned to us and said 'Do you mean there is another way of doing it?'

Another of our contacts summed it up well to me as "for us 'school is the sum of teachers, students, materials and surroundings, all our experience is relevant and must be used." So for some the experience starts with physically making the teaching materials, blackboards, slates, etc., that they need, this happened in particular in a basic literacy group we heard about . It is an essential way of allowing people to participate immediately, to share their skills and to demonstrate that they can contribute, it is starting with what they have.

This basic theme was central to all the work that we witnessed. From a highly professional 'well-funded' national research and training body for trade unions based in Sao Paulo to a small (but highly effective) community project in a small town in the North East. Both of these organisations had identified their role as being to 'train the trainers'. Not to establish another layer of 'professionals', but to ensure that the people they worked with developed their skills in a way that allowed them to share with their fellow workers, partners, neighbours what they had learnt, using the methods that they had been participating in within the courses.

It is important to understand that this does not remove the role of 'expert' as somebody that has much factual information and understanding of that information. What it does is ensure that the OWNERSHIP and therefore CONTROL of the PROCESS of education stays with the people who need it. The process involves a basic participation at all levels including planning, delivery and evaluation.

The results of this thinking and development have produced a startling number of people throughout the organisations we met who were clearly highly motivated to effect change in their community/workplace, and who could also plan effectively, speak clearly, think flexibly , and inventively and were well informed about politics both locally, nationally and internationally. (I don't think many of us expected questions about the British miners' strike in the interior of the North East of Brazil.) It is also true that the conditions of oppression under which many of the people we met lived and worked motivated them to action, but even allowing that, the level of awareness and numbers involved comfortably outshone anything I have witnessed in the U.K.

or most places in Europe. It must also be remembered that a very large percentage of the population leaves school after the first year, we were quoted a figure of 50% in many places. Another negative fact is that under the military government the curriculum for state education was tightly controlled giving young people little or no information about government economics, politics (national and international), and in its worst phase was actively repressing any potentially subversive material.

Examples of this can be seen in two of the courses we heard about from the two organisations I mentioned before. First a course for Trade Union activists run as a five day residential experience with men and women drawn from all over Brazil. The numbers are limited to 30 (anything larger was not considered practical or even thinkable), there is some attempt at ensuring equal numbers of men and women but this has severe practical problems not least of which is the small number of active women trade unionists, a not uncommon problem. The course is on 'Trade Union Education', it will lead on to other courses on Bargaining with Management, Arbitration and Quarterly Control Orders.

The residential setting is considered important to enhance the experience but also to ensure privacy. The first session is spent in discussion groups looking at how workers learn, i.e. through T.V.,books, conditioning, schooling, each other, etc., they then spend the rest of the day agreeing their lists and deciding who benefits from this learning. On the second day they spend the first half determining what would be useful in education, where people can get alternative education i.e. political parties, community organisations and unions. From this the groups must then define the role of trade union education. By the end of the second day the groups have to propose a methodology for trade union education. On the third day the groups must propose a way to develop this method practically after the course has finished, and also examine any reasons why they might not do it themselves and plan ways of preventing that. This part of the course with groups of no more than eight people in each, presents many problems of potential control i.e. steering participants to any one particular answer. So on the fourth day the groups examine the course they are on in the light of their methodology and principles to check whether it has manipulated them or not. The fifth is then free to plan practical action in their own organisation which can be reflected on at a later date.

The second example is at the other end of the spectrum. Basic adult education is still desperately needed in North East Brazil. Literacy is particularly important when you realise that if you are not literate you can't vote. Life is also more difficult because of the expense to obtain identity papers, birth certificates are very expensive, the net result is that many people still don't 'officially' exist. The need therefore is to develop a programme which will help to challenge these and other issues that oppress people every day. The process which has, therefore, been adopted starts by people coming together to tackle an issue or problem.

Very often they lack basic literacy, so the project helps them to identifying someone who is already literate. The project then trains that individual in basic literacy techniques. This emphasises the group's own creativity and is angled towards them using this process in solving the issue that they are confronting. The project is very keen not to develop the notion of a 'professional' literacy teacher, but has created from this process a movement of popular literacy teachers. This group now develops new ideas and acts as a mutual support: people who participate in the classes are encouraged to continue and develop their awareness further. Currently the project has ten groups operating in which none of the teachers are paid anything except travel costs and materials. Participants are only supplied with blackboard and a gas lamp, they must buy chalk and gas. This is done so that those involved are committed to the process not the payment.

From this base the project has recognised the need to stretch people further as it is clear many want to be actively involved in change. To do this the project (with the people) defined three key areas: History, Culture , and Political Analysis. The course run by the project was for activists who would then go out and act as trainers themselves. The process had, therefore, to be rigorous and completed in the right order, it involved the complete production of text books literally from scratch, (duplicated on a very old Roneo). The books provide much basic information but also provide guide lines for use. They are used as part of a group process so that participation method is retained, and the experience of the group is always related to the discussion/activity. There are two modules at present and a third in production. The first, which is for two groups of 15 people each, is about Unions. This has three parts. First 'What is Class' which

is worked on for fifteen hours, over three weeks. Secondly the 'History of Unions in Brazil' (which includes some history of European Unions). And thirdly 'Our Union', spending time looking at local unions' structure and history.

After the first unit the two groups are amalgamated to consolidate the experience; also, many people cannot sustain the amount of time needed, so drop out, although usually only temporarily. The second unit is divided into firstly, 'What does the law mean in our class society?', 'Who writes it, who judges it?. 'Which class do these people come from?' Secondly, 'Using the Law', especially the law relevant to that particular group. Thirdly, 'The Right to Organise'. A third unit on the History of Brazil is being prepared.

Perhaps a special note is due about this Project as their funding basically comes from the local church (Catholic), its key worker is a nun and they are under constant threat of physical violence. Many workers in the state are very unfairly treated over land rights. Only two years before a close friend and co-operator with the project who was a local organiser of the agriculturual workers' union, was shot down on her own doorstep by the gunmen of a local landowner. That threat applies to all, but the ordinary worker is at greatest risk: ten workers have died this year as a result of attacks by landowners' 'private armies'.

This last point to me confirms the importance of seeing 'process as product', because it demonstrates that it really works. If it was not effective it would have crumbled away long ago in the face of such problems. Instead it is a growing and key part of the liberation process which is starting to sweep through Brazil.

Finally, although some people we talked to dismissed Paulo Freire as irrelevant to modern education in Brazil, most saw him as 'The Old Man'. His ideas and thoughts were written and developed 15 to 20 years ago in Brazil, but they have seeded, and because they recognise the essential dynamism of the education process they have changed and grown and developed. I believe that this has contributed to the spirit of change now active in Brazil.

COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Dick Ellison

The range, size and variety of community groups and organisations in Brazil are very wide and impressive. Every issue, every area, every thought almost, has a group attached to it. One 'difference' which must be understood immediately however, is that in common with Trade Unions, Residents' Associations have been regulated by the government statute. The State will only recognise one residents' association per neighbourhood. This tends to mean that many of the associations suffer from the same corruption, mismanagement and male domination which the trade unions do. Many are run as self interest groups by a small number of people who use the power for themselves. Happily however, as with Trade Unions, there are increasing numbers of official Residents' Associations which are becoming truly democratic, and the even greater number of 'active' orientated groups are making themselves felt throughout Brazil.

For many Brazilians the issue of land rights is basic to their survival. Many of the people who migrate from the poorer agricultural areas of the North East to the 'rich' industrial areas surrounding the major cities, particularly Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, have to live on any land they can find to build whatever sort of shelter they can, so grow the favelas. As time passes the wood and corrugated iron are replaced by bricks and tiles, but without the right to stay that is worthless. So much of community action is centred around this issue, in all areas. The story of one favela we visited in Recife in the North East coast illustrates the struggle but also the resilience and inventiveness we found in all the communities we visited.

The area of Brasilia Teimosa is sandwiched between the Yacht Club and one of Recife's most exclusive beaches. It is therfore, prime development land and has been a target for land speculators over the last 20 years. Much of the Community Association's work has been over land rights, and fighting property companies and local Government.

This has created a strong identity and unified community, they have been largely successful in their battles. The area now houses 26,000 people with improved housing and planned development of building, electrification, drainage, water, roads, etc.

Their campaign was a classic one, many street meetings were held to plan action, often involving 350/500 people. Demonstrations were usually well supported also by other people in the town. Demonstrations would always follow different routes to ensure that polce/others could not control them easily. Early in the campaign the fundamental methodology of community based involvement and decision making was set down. This meant many small meetings, often setting up circles of chairs (or boxes) in the street, knocking on doors and asking people to come out and talk about action, but only about one thing at a time.

The Association this way developed their own plan for the area as an alternative to the 'plan' developed by Brazil's top urban plan er, which left no room for the original inhabitants of Brazilia. With their plan they produced a manifesto for development. This was put in the form of a pettition which ended up with over 7,500 signatures, and was presented to the President of Brazil.

Eventually a company approached the Community Association with a proposal to develop low cost housing with them. There was the same process of discussion. This time the company put money into a local Theatre Company to present the ideas for development, etc., in dramatic form. This proved very successful and the theatre company now continues as a strong part of the local life. The productions highlighted problems of multiple ownership or what happened to families renting.

A common agreement was reached that all people who were resident would get ownership of the land they were on. There would be a minimum of urbanisation, with some attempt to build in employment prospects.

This idea was then sold to Government who are currently financing the scheme. Before it was finally agreed a vote was held in the area; out of 4,000 people who voted, 98% were in favour. The development is now progressing on a block by block basis. During this whole process many death threats were made on the activists in the Association, many by the local police who were 'paid' by the Yacht Club in an attempt to frighten off people.

WOMEN IN POPULAR MOVEMENTS AND TRADE UNIONS

Mary Lewis and Clare Brown

Down with male chauvinism at home, in the street, at work, ir politics.

Although three weeks is a very short time in which to formulate opin-ions on the position of women in Brazil some of the problems they face make it impossible to ignore the fact that they are socially, politically and ideologically oppressed. Women are denied equality in all spheres of social and political life, in education, in the world of paid work, the family and personal relationships. From the poor mother of ten children in the favela, to the wealthy women in one of the 500 beauty parlours in Rio de Janeiro and the woman fighting for job security after the birth of her child to the millions of women battered by their men, the struggles of women run deep within the structures of a machista society. While this is true even for women in many countries of the developed world it is very strikingly and harshly so for Brazilian women. Despite this wherever we went there were signs of women from different classes beginning to articulate their problems and to feel their strength although not in any organised or co-ordinated sense.

In reviewing the role of women in popular movements and trade unions, a number of observations stand out. Women's involvement and participation in popular movements in community activities, in literacy schemes, neighbourhood organisations, residents' associations and favela life is extensive. However there is a remarkable lack of recognition by many, if not most, activists of women's involvement and contribution. Education provision in content and structure

tends to ignore women and their needs, e.g. we did not meet with any group which provided creche facilities. Where courses are being established, the projects and schemes organised for and about women seem to have been generated by grass-roots, women's demands and radical women activists. This is true in the trade union movement where the involvement of women is traditionally low. In the few women's organisations and groups some very interesting and dynamic work is being done with women and for communities.

The presidents of the favela residents' association we visited were mostly women. Their jobs involved them in the administration and organisation of the favela community, extensive communication between residents, various organisations, municipal and state representatives, as well as the provision of health centres and schools. Many of them have also been involved in organising opposition to, and demonstrations against government policies (the first visible movement in the 70's against soaring inflation and the rising cost of living was witnessed in the opposition demonstrations of the women in the favelas of Sao Paulo). The energy and commitment of the women there was striking. Through their work they had grown in confidence and ability. Some of them had been illiterate before becoming involved in their communities. All of them pointed out that despite their hard work few women managed to be elected to power positions at higher levels of Association.

Women are to be found in greater numbers than men on many of the community based courses run by popular education organisations. This is particularly true of literacy classes. One organiser in FASE commented that women tend to "stay the course" more than men. Despite this recognition and a genuine concern about women's position, there are no courses designed specifically for women or classes which deal with women's issues or needs. Much of the material used was male oriented. This was particularly true of the visual material - an important form of communication particularly in non-literate and semi-literate communities.

The 13th of May group, another popular education organisation, runs courses which aim to promote an analysis, critique and trans-

better" is a guiding principle. But an analysis and critique of sexual politics is not seen to be central to the transformation of society. None of the courses they run cater for the special needs of women, yet the group was concerned about the subordinate position of women in Brazil, particularly in the sphere of work and trade unionism and discussed with us strategies for promoting women's involvement and participation.

One of the organisations we visited did run a course specifically for women. SEDUP in Guarabira runs a course for women dealing with health issues affecting them and their children. Birth control is on the agenda but is discussed mainly in the context of a general health programme. While the government and the Catholic Church are against birth control, various contraceptive measures are available but are administered without proper advice or adequate medical care and attention. This has led many groups concerned with women to adopt a wary position in relation to contraceptive methods. At SEDUP the only form of birth control discussed is the rhythm method, which for undernourished, simple peasant women seems singularly inappropriate. Abortion is never discussed. This may be a reflection of the wider social opposition to abortion as well as the extensive involvement of the Church in SEDUP's activities. One social worker in Recife told us that home abortions are common and often lead to serious medical problems or even death for the women involved.

While women are involved and participate in large numbers in popular movements and in popular education, this is much less so in the trade union movement. Women do join unions and indeed women have established their own unions, e.g. The Domestic Workers' Association - jobs which were traditionally thought to be impossible to organise in this country. Women are however involved in some trade union struggles at the grassroots. For example the multinational cosmetics company Avon in Sao Paulo went on strike in March. The majority of strikers and pickets were women.

However, despite the struggles of these women workers, women's involvement in the trade union movement generally is low. Women are rarely found at the leadership levels of the union even in

industries with large concentrations of women. For example, the chemical workers in Sao Paulo have 6 women on an executive of 24, despite a 50% female membership. The chemical workers in the ABCD region have a 40% female membership but no women at all on the executive. However, a women's committee has been established to promote the involvement of women in the union. This has involved them in the analysis of union structure, procedures, communications and sexual harassment. While this committee is still in its infancy its inception is a positive step towards overcoming sexism within the union and promoting greater participation of women.

The issue of women's involvement in trade unionism is a growing concern for trade union and political activists as well as women workers. In Sao Paulo in 1984 the first conference of working women met to discuss the problems facing women workers, particularly the problem of low wages. Workshops have been held with the chemical and pharmaceutical workers about women in the trade unions.

The first CUT conference had proposals about women workers and women's working condition, but there has been no concrete follow-up from this conference. While we were told that equal pay and equal rights are now being seen as important issues by CUT, there was no evidence of any specific involvement by CUT in these struggles. CUT has provided no specific courses for women and there appears to be no strategy for involving women in courses generally, or any move towards positive discrimination in favour of women. The view of some trade union education is the familiar argument that such measures divide the workers and set up an ideological opposition. According to this approach, feminism is a bourgeois diversion from the class struggle. It was alleged that feminists were, on the whole exclusive and elitist and removed from the experience of the popular classes in Brazil. It wasn't possible to really challenge this view since we didn't meet with many feminist women, or feminist groups. However, those we did meet with were in fact very much involved in the practical struggles of the popular classes.

One organisation which described itself as feminist and which is clearly part of the grass-roots educational programme is SOS CORPO. This is a group which is concerned with health education for women

with the emphasis firmly on locally based initiatives. The Sao Paulo group work with and alongside ordinary women from a house in a working class community where local women receive free health care information, advice and assistance. They also carry out research into women's health problems. The Recife group, a collective of nine women, one of whom is a doctor, have set up a telephone counselling service albeit with limited back-up because of the lack of facilities. They broadcast on local radio and have produced a play which deals with women's health issues. They also liaise with local hospitals and maternity clinics on the health care needs specific to women and advise the local Ministry of Health on the changes in the law on family planning. They have set up four research projects on sterilisation, abortion, contraception and young people's sexuality. They have also developed a tape-slide package on sex education for use in schools, which we saw and were most impressed with.

Another organisation we visted was CASA DA MULHER. This is a feminist group concerned with the promotion of women's rights and women's paid employment. A central concern is to create and promote jobs for women. To this end the centre sets up work projects, provides advice, financial backing (mainly from the Ford Foundation) and moral support. The group has also opened a shop on its premises to sell the produce of some of the projects. It is hoped that each project will eventually become self-sufficient particularly since the Ford Foundation funding is only guaranteed for a further year. However, this is not likely since many of the women have not fully developed the skills and expertise necessary to be self-sufficient. Also many of the women involved in the projects are illiterate.

Among the projects they have set up is PROJECT CARPINA. This project centres around the creation of jobs in fishing at the new dam at Carpina, in the production of manioc flour in a small factory, and the development of communal market gardens and orchards. The work initially involved only the women of the area - 1200 in all - but the project has now expanded and has generated jobs for the men as well as providing this community with the means of self-sufficiency.

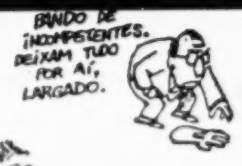
CASA DA MULHER also acts as an information and documentation centre

about all aspects of women's life, including financial information, statistics, relationships with intermediary agencies and so on. This part of their work is still in its early stages but the group (twenty women in all) hope to develop this work and distribute the information throughout the area in readily accessible places.

The education provision for women in the popular movements is on the whole very limited. The organisations themselves, the courses and the materials are very male centred. However, there are signs that some organisations are beginning to question the position of women not only in society generally but in their courses and their organisational structures. However, where this is happening the concern seems to be with women as objects of change. Women as agents and forces of change is a fact recognised by apparently only a few active and radical women working in the popular movements some of whom are seriously tackling the question of women's subordination and trying to provide the instruments for women's emancipation. Marli, a domestic servant in Rio, said in 'Mulherio', a feminist magazine:

"Gone are the times of Amelia who put up with all
(a classical carnival song)
Our rights are the same nowadays."

While there is a long way to go before women have equality in Brazil Marli's words reflect a growing current of resistance, challenge and change by women in Brazil.



HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK IN BRAZIL.

Peter Williams

In 1975 Brazil was picked out by the World Health Organisation as having the worst work-accident record in the world. 15% of its 12.9 million workers (i.e. almost 2 million) were injured in that year. by 1982, the latest year for which we have figures, this 'Index of Accidents' had fallen to 5.7%, a remarkable achievement, according to the Brazilian Government, of the policy of accident prevention which it instituted in 1975.

Accident figures are notoriously unreliable, however, and a more critical examination of these claims may be in order. Over this period the number of insured workers almost doubled, reaching 24.4 million in 1981, 20.7 million in 1982. Furthermore, after 1975 the responsibility for treating accident victims and recording accidents was transferred from the National Institute of Social Welfare (INPS) to private medical firms. These, by virtue of being paid a fixed fee, had a commercial interest in reducing registrations, and thus the medical attention they are obliged to give, an interest which was shared by the employers, who benefited from lower accident figures by being able to claim lower insurance premiums through a lower risk rating. Resulting from this simple change, the number of accidents fell by 20% in 1976.

The following year the employer was made responsible for paying any workers injured during the first fortnight after a work accident,and also for reporting the incident to the INPS. This further reduced the number of reported accidents. Coupled with the inclusion of non-industrial (and therefore less exposed to hazards) workers in the expansion of the national insurance schemes, it is hardly surprising that the apprent accident rate in Brazil fell.

Figures of industrial disablements are considered to be more 'robust' indicators of safety; figures for fatalities even more so. In Brazil's case, in absolute terms these rose over the same period from 4,000 deaths in 1975 to 4,496 in 1982 (after a peak of 4,808 in 1981).The number permanently disabled in 1982 (31,800) was in fact higher than the previous year (29,900).

According to the trade union health and safety organisation DIESAT, the reality, as evidenced by the constant or rising death and disablement toll, was that at the height of the 'Brazilian miracle' the image of a prosperous country and growing economy was only achieved by an intensive exploitation of its workers.(1) At the Society's 1983 Conference, the President of the Brazilian Society of Hand Surgeons denounced the situation of poor working conditions which resulted in a 'tragic mountain' of 500,000 amputated fingers on one side and on the other 500,000 mutilated workers - the sad reality of the Brazilian worker.(2)

The enforcement of Brazil's relatively weak health and safety legislation is the responsibility of each State's government. The low priority afforded to health and safety is neatly summed up by the resources afforded by the Sao Paulo state, which encompasses one of the world's heavily industrialised regions. A team with only 10 doctors and 5 engineers have to attempt to police 116,000 workplaces (3) Their equipment is said to be extremely limited (a dust sampler, a noise meter and a thermometer). By comparison, the Swedish Labour Inspectorate, with a similar workload (130,000 workplaces) has a team of 650 (a figure which excludes their consultant physicians) comprising no less than 350 inspectors and 70 technical experts. Their work is backed by another 700 municipal inspectors with responsibility for small workplaces.(4) Sao Paulo is said to be one of the better States with respect to health and safety enforcement. (2)

Poor as the Brazilian work accident record may be, the field of occupational disease is worse. According to Herval Ribeiro, Technical Co-Ordinator of DIESAT, Brazilian workers suffer diseases such as silicosis which have almost disappeared in other countries. The 'medieval' work conditions should not be seen as backwardness due to the underdeveloped nature of Latin America, but rather to a global division of labour, with multinationals in part reserving their dirty work for Brazil; also a reflection of the same cheapness of life manifested in super - exploitation of a relatively unprotected

workforce.

Thus Lucas Industries was induced to spend a claimed £1/2 million in the 1970s to control lead pollution from its vehicle battery factory in Birmingham, U.K. Meanwhile at its 90% owned Brazilian subsiduary Rossi (Sao Bernardo, SP) workers are issued with the minimum of protective clothing and are even expected to buy their own overalls at full price.

The problems facing trade unionists in search of safety and health are not technical ones, ignorance of a hazardous effects of substances, for example, but political and economic ones. Many of the hazards Brazilian workers face are the 'old' ones (in European terms) - amputations (in Bahia state alone there are an estimated 1,000 sisal workers who have lost a hand or arm in lethal and primitive processing machinery); exposure to asbestos and lead dust (the Chemical Workers of the ABCD Region had their first strike over health against lead exposure at the Ferro Enamel factory there in August 1984).

In addition, workers' organisations are handicapped by the lack of factory based trade union representation. The small but growing number of workplaces where Factory Commissions (Comissao de Fabrica) have been won are mostly in the areas of union militancy in and around Sao Paulo, and mostly at foreign -owned firms. This lack of rights not only weakens the workers' position (indeed it is hard to imagine a health and safety struggle without workplace union recognition) but also makes the statutory right for workers to elect representatives on to joint management Safety Committees a key issue in trade union terms.

Depending on the 'Risk Category' of its industry, an enterprise is obliged to set up a Committee for the Prevention of Industrial Accidents (CIPA) if it employs more than a certain number of workers (ranging from 20 in the case of a mine to 100 in the case of a bank). Government tables lay down the number of worker representatives, known as CIP(A)eiros, who will be elected to the CIPA. In the examples above, the workers would be allowed one representative, or two if the

numbers employed exceeded 50 for the mine and 500 for the bank. The rights of workers in low hazardous sectors is evidently restricted. Nevertheless, the annual election of the CIPA representative is a major event in many union calenders.

The Cipeiros have a unique right (though one which is not always observed) to security of employment. Pregnant women and union leaders also enjoy job protection, but in one case their condition is temporary, and union leaders have no right of access to the work-place. this makes Cipeiros the sole representative of the union in many workplaces.

The Chemical Workers of the ABCD Region of Sao Paulo state (Sindicato dos Quimicos do ABCD) are amongst the most active in the health and safety arena. Getting activists elected to CIPAs is one of its priorities. Training offered to them by the union is limited by resources - they guarantee a minimum of one session to Cipeiros.

They have adapted the role of a union as defined by the military junta, which was primarily one of administering medical attention, into an exciting and by any standards advanced, integrated health care system.

The often paternalistic style of health care which unions traditionally provided (for their members and non-members) has been improved and augumented by advice on how to win better conditions at work (and in the community), early identification of work-related conditions which is markedly better than that prevailing in the U.K. and an unrivalled real participation in the health process. The union's slogan is 'Health is Ours' (A Saude e Nossa). It means just that:'You are not just a patient, object of a health care of a dubious quality, but the responsible subject of your own health care' states a union leaflet.

Workers and their families attend clinics at the union building or in state funded (through the agency COBRAL) health centres. A union representative is in permanent attendance at the latter, and sits on Community Health Centre committees. The presence of the union

representative, who is often a Cipeiro at a local factory, also serves to strengthen both the union's standing, and that of its representative.

Central to union campaigns for health and safety is DIESAT (Interunion Department of Studies and Research into Health and the Work Enviroment). This was set up some years ago as an offshoot of the independent study unit DIEESE (see elsewhere), upon which it is modelled. Brazilian unions are not allowed to combine or make affiliations across artifical barriers such as industry or region erected under the Labour Laws of the departing military government.

As an inter-union body DIESAT has been, strictly-speaking, illegal. It had avoided prosecution by its voluntary form of organisation, which is based on substantial secondments of personnel from the trade union movement which it serves. It had 100-plus affiliated trade union organisations, who have a joint membership of over 3 million, and is expecting to be granted legal status since it was recently recognised as a public charity by the liberal Sao Paulo state government. It has research, advisory and educational roles, publishes a quarterly magazine, 'Work and Health' (Trabalho e Saude) and has just published a seminal work, entitled 'What workers fall ill and die from' (De Que Adeocom e Morrem os Trabalhadores).

At almost every trade union meeting the need for international trade union co-operation was expressed, whether in the form of requests for information on the hazards of chemicals; through joint campaigns with the trade unions of a multinational enterprise's parent country for equalisation of standards; or through assistance in the area of education. The latter has not evolved as far in Brazil as in the U.K. or Scandinavia , and will be forming a major part of follow-up work arising from the city. Such contacts may begin to the benefit of the safety and health, and unity, of workers in Brazil and Britain alike.

The fruits of such international co-operation may intitially seem unequally divided in favour of Brazilian colleagues. However, if there were to be a single conclusion from the current study it would be that as a major capitalist producer, and one of massively

expandingimportance, it will be as important to British trade unionists to prevent erosion of their health and safety standards against competition from Brazil and other less well regulated developing countries as it will be of benefit to the Brazilian workers themselves.

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CHEMICAL WORKERS' UNION DEMONSTRATION, SAO PAULO AREA." BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS" -"IT IS OUR HEALTH".

THE CHURCH AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Alison Harker & Clare Brown

PERNAMBUCO 1985 - FISHING IN A RIVER ESTUARY

The revolution in the Catholic Church in Brazil began in the 1950s. Until then the Church had been associated with the rich and ruling class. The seeds of the revolution began with the formation of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops in 1956 and the appointment of Dom Helder Camara as its first secretary.

The changes first became apparent in the North East where the needs were greater than perhaps was so in other areas. Not only was there extreme poverty in this largely rural area but there was massive repression by the landowners. During the 1950s, to organise was to break the labour laws. But the situation for workers was very bad and particularly in the sugar cane estates there were almost conditions of

slavery. In 1950 Peasant Leagues were established in the North East. These began with philanthropic objectives but they became political organisations. Also in 1955 the Service for Rural Orientation for Pernambuco was established and this led to a large scale establishment of trade unions and the establishment of the rural literacy radio school. The Church was heavily involved in this because of the Bishops' belief that the unions were the only organisations which presented any possibility of change for workers because they could be organisations of national significance rather than just associations which presented their members. So from the 1950s onwards the aim for the Bishops was to help build an enormous and pervasive organisation of workers.

One of the early tasks of the Bishops Conference was to formulate an emergency plan for the Church's work in Brazil, at the request of Pope John XXIII. One section of the plan concentrated upon the plight of the workers and the importance of trade unions, co-operatives and popular education, using alternative radio as a means of communication.

The emergency plan and indeed the formation of the Conference of Bishops came about following the papal letter of John XXIII in 1963. Part of the papal letter had spoken about the situation of peasants and had advocated the organisation of peasants so they could take control of their own destiny. It was this which marked a change of direction for the Church in Brazil.

In 1964 the military coup led to large scale repression of those who were involved in organisations and many priests were among those persecuted and killed. Of course the bishops saw this and were witness to the extent of the torture and repression of the workers. The Church took the definitive step of coming to the side of the poor when they saw that the repression has reached such a point that the workers no longer had the space to express their demands.

CONSEQUENCES OF TAKING THE OPTION FOR THE POOR.

The decision to take the option for the poor meant that the nature of

the Church changed. The actions of the Church were based on a Theology of Liberation which arose as a method of reflection on innocent communal suffering. It came from the poor and those in solidarity with them . The basis of Liberation Theology is that suffering comes from political and economic decisions and is not a so called reality presented by God. However, it is not merely an interpretation but a force for hope and change, and incorporates a preferential option for the poor.

What had once been a rich Church became a poor one. The Church lost its access to Government and the divisions between the conservative and radical elements in the Church became very pronounced. However as the situation under the military regime deteriorated, Bishops throughout Brazil realised that what had begun in the North East was right. Moreover, the Medellin Conference of Latin American Bishops which took place in 1968 and the subsequent Puebla Conference showed that what had been happening in Brazil was also happening elsewhere and that Libertion Theology was the only realistic way forward. Throughout Latin America the Church was looking at its grass roots rather than its clerical structure, to the ordinary people rather than to the theologians. Its base was ecumenical and Christian, not merely Catholic.

In practical terms the adoption of liberation theology meant that the church was with the people not for them, so base communities were established in the work place organisations as well as within the community. Nuns and priests work and live with people who are oppressed. In a society which is characterised by consumerism and competition the aim is for solidarity, community and peace. The Church is now seem as its base, not in terms of its clerical or even lay groupings.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

As the Union movement grew and acquired its own advisors and its own confederations,, the church thought it should step aside. There is now no question at all that the Church is not on the side of the poor and the workers. however, this realisation led to a change in strategy, to a strategy of supporting rather than initiating workers' organisations. Thus lay base organisations and civic bodies were allowed to take their rightful place. However, the Church was still present via the Christian base organisations. As a result the Church

began to support the Centre for the Defence of Human Rights and the Justice and Peace Commission. The Church also supports the Land Commissions and those on young people and factory workers. The work of the Commissions is based closely on the methodology is to execute a rigorous analysis of the situation, discuss it and carry out the agreed action. Inbuilt is a regular evaluation of what is being done. The Church works on the basis that prayer and celebration is about daily life and not what is in heaven. The victories of the workers are a cause for celebration. A negative response to this approach has come from Rome and there is now enormous pressure exerted by the Vatican upon the Church in Brazil.

The Church in Brazil believes that what is needed is a huge workers' movement which will sweep the country. It believes that people should take the power and make their own decisions. Most importantly, it believes that it must guard against liberating people from the landowners to bring them under its own domination or that of the Trade Unions. We saw evidence of the Church encouraging workers' movements and indeed playing a very important part in the lives of ordinary people.

CONCLUSIONS

For the majority of the group who had gone to Brazil from a background of the tradition of the English Churches, the evidence of the activities of the Brazilian Church was overwhelming and incredibly impressive. Indeed, for some people this presented one of the highlights of the whole study tour. there was no escaping the importance of the role it played, its influence on ordinary people and their influence on it.

There was also no escaping the deep commitment and dedication of church people who were working with the poor. Indeed their bravery in the face of seemingly insuperable odds was impressive and inspirational. Bravery in the face of oppression is also reflected in internal Church politics. Leonardo Boff, the most famous Brazilian Liberation Theologian, has been ostracised by the Vatican for his views and beliefs, yet he has been supported by high standing Catholic

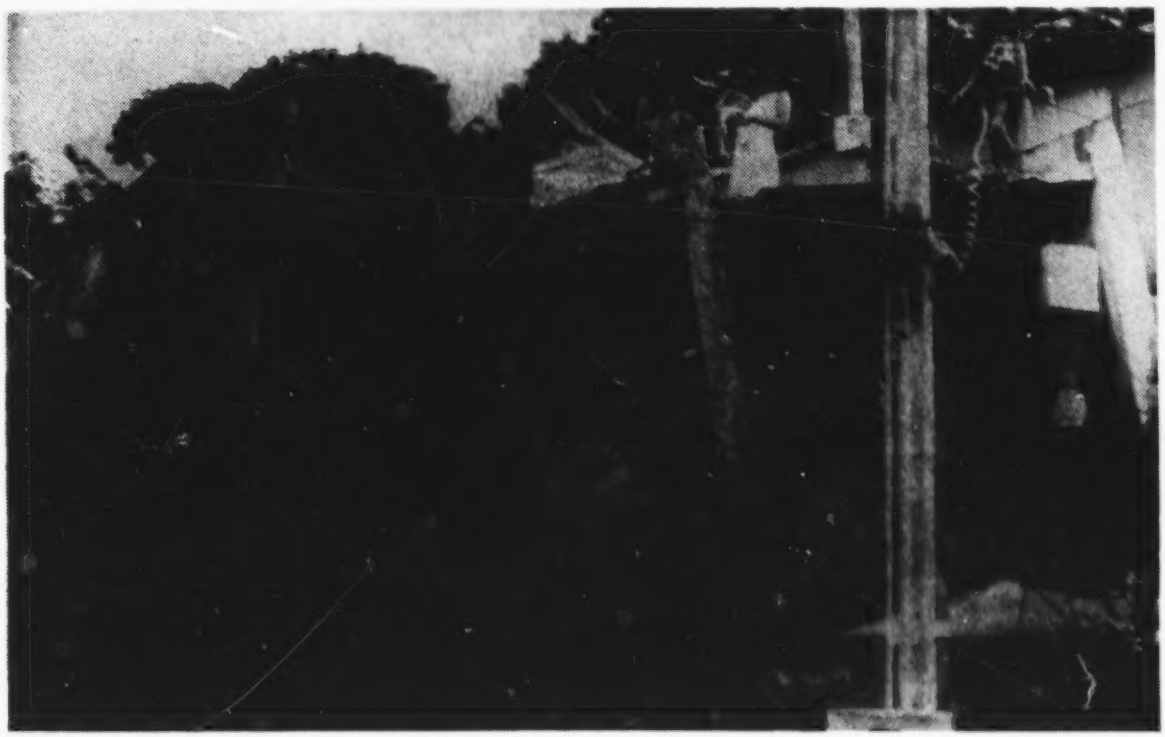
supporters such as the Brazilian Cardinals Lotscheider and Arns, who accompanied him to Rome to face Vatican questioning on his views. Leonardo Boff also has enormous support in thousands of lay groups. This is a far cry from Europe where ordinary people would be hard pressed to know the name of any theologian. Perhaps this is the most obvious indication of the contrast between the Church in Britain and Brazil and a clear indication of the important role with ordinary people the Church plays in Brazil.

SAO PAULO 1985-AVON COSMETICS STRIKE, "COMRADES -WE ARE FIGHTING FOR WHAT IS OUR RIGHT, ALL TOGETHER WE SHALL WIN.

THE BRAZILIAN MIRACLE.

Geordie Murray

THE SLUMS OF RIO, CALLED FAVELAS, ARE BUILT IN ANY AVAILABLE SPACE. THIS ONE IS IN CONSTANT DANGER OF BEING WASHED AWAY.



The study visit to Brazil has left an indelible imprint on my way of thinking and will probably colour my political views for as long as I live. Still vivid in my mind is a country of immense size and beauty, of extreme wealth and of dire poverty, of social injustice and repression, of sunshine and of a sunshine people with a zest for life (under social conditions most British people would find appalling) and a political awareness I had not encountered before.

The overriding situation throughout our stay was the fight for life by President-elect Tancredo Neves and this was never far away from the thoughts of the people we met, which was understandable given the memory of the previous 20 years of military rule. It was not uncommon to come across scores of people crowded round a T.V. or radio to hear the latest news of "Tancredo", the thought of his death brought about a tangible depression in the people we met.

Of the people and organisations we talked to, education and a better standard of living were the outstanding goals, with education in a lot of cases being a prerequisite for improving the quality of life. Unfortunately, for the poorest people just being able to survive is the main function of life, with little chance to learn or improve their livelihood. The people who are fortunate enough to have jobs and earn a wage are in reality much worse off than unemployed people in Britain. The wages are very low and becoming worse every day due to rapid inflation, job security in most cases is nil, and the working conditions are primitive compared to the more developed Western countries.

The unions and support organisations are trying to get to grips with these and many other problems of an equally serious nature, but the unions have been so beset by the financial burdens put upon them by the State that they must set themselves a new list of priorities. The placing of Health and Welfare responsibilities upon the unions is not only an atrocious burden on finances, thereby limiting their effectiveness as industrial and social reforming bodies, but the State to a large extent can also ignore the social need of these provisions. Having these responsibilities, until now the role of the unions in society has been transmuted in the eye of the membership and other workers into a kind of social benefactor which you join for health care or social activities only.

In the almost non-existent world of Brazilian Safety at Work, it is

ironic that while some of the standards set, especially the Threshold Limit Values, are better than in Britain, they are irrelevant because employers ignore them with little fear of being sanctioned. With such a large pool of labour it is evidently cheaper to let a worker be injured or suffer an industrial disease rather than provide safe systems of work, better training, more modern plant and equipment with safety features built in, or personal protection. there also appears to be problems relating to compensation (or the absence of it) for people maimed or killed at work.

A lot of the blame for this situation must fall on the shoulders of the multinational companies who use Brazil and its workers as a vast reservoir of cheap labour. Their only motive is the accumulation of wealth and they have no compassion for the plight of their employees or the social consequences which develop as a result of their policies and practices. If one could imagine Brazil as a huge farm on which the farmer plants crops on every square inch of ground every year, without replenishing the nutrients of the soil, so that in X number of years the soil would be barren, then in this analogy the multinationals would be farmer and the social fabric of the country would be the soil.

Since our return, we have done our best to publicise the human conditions in Brazil, particularly those at work, to make people in Britain aware of the realities over there. We have also tried to make a practical contribution, however modest, helping in the exchange of information between trade unions in similar industries, and attempting to make contacts between workers in the same multinational companies.

The social reconstruction I witnessed in Recife is amongst the most callous pieces of governmental thuggery it has been my misfortune to encounter. On the furthest outskirts of this city, concrete "townships" are being built, for the purpose of rehousing poor families who apparently have no choice but to move. The two estates I saw resembled immense barracks, they are supposed to contain 40,000

families when completed, and other similarly thoughtless housing is being planned. There is no provision of social amenities and only 7,000 (mostly skilled) jobs nearby, in close proximity to numerous army camps. It is class oppression comparable to the racial oppression of apartheid in South Africa, but does not receive the same publicity and therefore not the deserved international condemnation.

There appears to be no progressive thinking behind the movement of families and whole communities, from the city where they could make a living of sorts, to an area far inland where employment is a pipe-dream and even the meagre living they managed in the city is denied them. The flats into which the people are being moved are concrete blocks like air raid shelters with few windows or doors, they are unpainted and altogether very depressing places to live. It seems quite obvious that the City Government have made the decision to hide this poorest section of the community in types of displacement camps, with the cynicism of dictators.

While the problems I have mentioned are serious, they are only a few of the ones we came across. There is of course much help that could be given from abroad, particularly financial aid in the form of a reduction in Brazil's foreign debt. If the new Government can ally this with an agreed plan on social and economic reform, and a serious commitment to basic human rights and welfare (and not just in theory), the people can really benefit.

Education is another area that must be tackled as a priority and here, as well as help or co-operation with the Government, there is a great need for international collaboration in workers' and community education. The trade unions and support organisations are already facing up to the problems of adult illiteracy and lack of experience of grass-roots leadership by producing their own books and pamphlets, setting up their own courses and self-help groups. Colleagues in developed countries like Britain can help by translating our more plentiful materials and working on these with Brazilian groups. If

they are prepared to learn Portuguese, that is, they could help train a larger quantity of Brazilian study leaders to carry on the work. This point was made to us on numerous occasions, and we hope to respond in some small way.

In the end, we can only assist. Brazil has enough already for all if fairly shared, and the only people who can solve these problems are the Brazilians themselves.

APPENDIX 1

Name	LASG/WEA(or affiliate) involvement	Workers', Popular, Co-operative & Internationalist Education Experience
1. Derek Bodell	Newcastle Branch NALGO (Secretary)	Industrial Relations, Law seminars co-ordinator/leader
2. Jeff Bridgford	WEA-NANTES T.Union Exchange (leader) WEA/T.Union "Links with Europe" group	International Trade Unionism: researcher & lecturer.WEA tuto (occasional)
3. Clare Brown	WEA Ennerdale Branch (Secretary)	Rural teacher in Mozambique (3yrs) WEA Womens Education tutor; college lecturer (apprentices) Portuguese speake
4. Ilona Buchroth	WEA Hamburg.Women in Co-operatives Exchange (Co-ordinator)	Community Education worker (Gateshead):German Young Workers' Exchange Links Organiser.
5. Victor Cadaxa	WEA tutor organiser; LASG founder-member (Tyneside,Sunderland)	Health and Safety,Community Education and Latin America course tutor and organiser;contact with Adult Education organisations in Brazil;Portuguese speaker
6. Dick Ellison	Sunderland Community Education Group, N.East (Community) Training Group	Community Education worker (Sunderland);WEA Community Education tutor and course organiser;contact with Community Organisations in Brazil.
7. Janet Hannah	Industrial Common Ownership Movement (North East)	WEA/TUC course tutor(Women in Trade Unions);Co-operative Education tutor and researcher
8. Alison Harker	South Tyneside Voluntary Project Latin American Front (Tyneside)	Community and Informal Educatior worker;War on Want (North East) Board;WEA course organiser and tutor(community and Women's Education)
9. Mary Lewis	WEA Sunderland Bch. (Committee),WEA District Council	WEA course organiser and tutor (Womens' Education)
10. Geordie Murray	North East Hazards Group,Cosh-it Wallsend (Chairman)	Shipyard Safety Committee, Cosh -it education co-ordinator(Health Safety)
11. Peter Williams	North East Hazards Group(Secretary) WEA Trade Union Education Advisory Group	WEA/TUC course organisor and tutor (Health and Safety) Health and Safety Information and Advice worker

APPENDIX 2

SUMMARY OF VISIT AND ORGANISATIONS VISITED

1. Sao Paulo 24th March - 30th March 1985

Sao Paulo programme by Chris Whitehouse of Centro Pastoral Vergueiro 7290,01272 Sao Paulo, SP

Accommodation in Sao Paulo arranged by Chris Whitehouse at Faculdades Associadas Ipiranga, Av. Ipiranga, Sao Paulo SP. Individual rooms and breakfast.

Organisations visited in Sao Paulo.

(a) Associacao de Moradores, Favela Sao Saverio, Sao Paulo

(b) Federacao das Associacoes de Moradores (Committee Members)

Parque de Bristol area favelas, Sao Paulo

(c) Centro Pastoral Vergueiro, Rua Vergueiro 7290,01272 Sao Paulo,SP

(d) Nucleo de Educacao Popular 13 de Maio, Rua Dora Avelina 55,

Vila Mariana, Sao Paulo

(e) FASE-Sao Paulo, Rua Loefgren 1651 casa 6, Vila Clementina,

Santa Cruz, Sao Paulo

(f) Sindicato dos Quimicos de Sao Paulo

(g) Avon Products Strike Committee

(h) DIEESE (Trade Union Social and Economic Studies)
Departamento de Formacao. Rua Sebastiao Pereira 221, 3' andar, conj 6
Santa Ceciliam, Sao Paulo
Rua das Carmelitas 149 3' andar, 01020 Sao Paulo,SP

(i) CUT - Departamento de Formacao, CUT National, Rua Ouvidor Peleja 242, Santa Cruz, Sao Paulo

(j) CUT - Departamento de Relacoes com Sindicatos Europeus, CUT Estadual (SP) R.Calixto da Mota 75, Vila Mariana, Sao Paulo, SP.

(k) DIESAT (Trade Union Health and Safety Studies)

(l) Sindicato dos Metalurgicos de Sao Bernardo, Rua Joao Basso 121, Sao Bernardo, SP.

(m) Comite Pro-Comissao de Fabrica, APV do Brazil, c/o Sindicato dos Metalurgicos, De Sao Bernardo

Comite Pro-Comissao de Fabrica, (Rossi/Lucas " "

Comite Pro-Comissao de Fabrica, Rolls Royce de Brazil "

(n) Sindicato dos Quimicos do ABCD, Av. Lino Jardin 401, Santo Andre, SP

(o) Sindicato dos Trabalhadores em Transportes de Sao Paulo

(p) Secretaria de Educacao de Estado de Sao Paulo, Praca da Republica,

2. Recife 30th March 1985 - 4th April 1985

Recife Programme arranged by Oxfam, Field Director - Andrew Couldride Caixa Postal 1987,50,000 Recife, Pernambuco.

Accommodation in Recife arranged by Oxfam at the Cecosne Training Centre - rua Jose Osorio, Recife PC. - Dormitory with breakfast provided.

In Recife the group visited the following organisations:

(a) Oxfam, Caixa Postal 1987, 50,000 Recife, Pernambuco

(b) FETAPE-Rua Gervasio Pires,876 Recife, Pernambuco

(c) FASE - Rua Cedro 52, Casa Amarela, 50,000 Recife, Pernambuco

(d) Conference of Brazilian Bishops - Paulo Crespo (Sec) CNBB NE2, Rua de Giriquits 48, 50,000 Recife, PC.

(e) CENTRU - Rua Japeganga 64, Prado, Recife, PC.

(f) Folha Sindical c/o FASE.

(g) SOS Corpo, Rua do Hospicio, 859/14 Recife, Pernambuco

(h) Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Av Caxanga, 108/10, Madalena, Recife, PC.

(i) Centro Luis Freire - Rua 27 Janeiro, 181, Carmo, Olinda, PC.

(j) Associacao dos Moradores, Brasilia Teimosa, Recife.

(k) Sindicato dos Metalurgicos de Pernambuco.

(l) Centro Josue de Castro (de Estudos e Pesquizas), Rua de Sao Borja 495, Boa Vista, 50,000 Recife, Pernambuco.

The following organisations were visited elsewhere:

1. Pernambuco: Afogados da Ingazeira (Sertao)

(m) Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais, Tabira, Pernambuco

(n) Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais, (no village) nr. Afogados da Ingazeira, Pernambuco

(o) Agricultural Project, Pesqueira, Pernambuco

2. Paraiba: Guarabira (Agreste)

(p) SEDUP (POPULAR EDUCATION SERVICE) CEP 58,200 Guarabira, Paraiba

(q) Orientation Centre for Human Rights, Guarbira, Paraiba

3. Pernambuco: Itapissuma (Coast)

(r) Fishing Project

(APPENDIX 2)
CONTD.

3. Rio de Janeiro 4th April 1985 - 13th April 1985

(Easter Holiday 5th - 8th April)

Rio de Janeiro programme arranged by Lorenzo Zanetti of FASE - Rio (Federacao de Orgaos para Assistencia Social e Educacional), Rua Senador Dantas 117, Grupo 1518 20031 Rio de Janeiro, R.J.

Accommodation in Rio arranged by Sonia Carvalho of United Nations Association - International Service at Hotel Turistico, Rua Laderira da Gloria, Rio de Janeiro, R.J. - dormitory and breakfast.

Organisations visited in Rio de Janeiro:

(a) UNA=IS (Brazil), Rua Lopes Quintas 340, C119, Jardim Botanico, 22460 Rio de Janeiro, R.J.

(b) FASE=Rio, Rua Senador Dantas 117, Grupo 1518, 20031 Rio de Janeiro, R.J.

(c) Sindicato dos Metalurgicos de Volta Redonda, Resende e Barra Mansa. Rua Gustavo Lira n 9, Volta Redonda, R.J.

(d) Companhia Siderurgica Nacional, Volta Redonda, R.J.

(e) Sindicato dos Metalurgicos de Niteroi, Travessa Cadete Xavier Leal n 31, Niteroi, R.J.

(f) Estaleiro MacLaren do Brasil, Niteroi, R.J.

(g) Sindicato dos Metroviarios do Rio de Janeiro, Rua Evaristo de Veiga 34, s1206 Rio de Janeiro, R.J.

(h) Mobral - Rio, Rua da Alfandega 214, 20070 Rio de Janeiro, R.J.

(i) IBASE - Rua Vicente de Sonza 29, Botatogo.

(j) Secretaria de Estado de Planejamento Controle, Rua Pinheiro Machada s/u - Anexo 6 andar, Sala 616, Rio de Janeiro, R.J.

(k) CUT - Secretaria de Formacao, Rua Franklin Roosevelt 194 Sala 802

Rio de Janeiro, R.J.

(l) Sindicato dos Bancarios do Rio de Janeiro, Av. Presidente Vargas 502,

Rio de Janeiro.

(m) CONCLAT - Rio (c/o Sindic dos Bancarios)

(n) CEDAC (Centro de Acao Communitaria) - Rio Avendia Rio Branco 277

Sala 1007, Rio de Janeiro, R.J.

(o) Grupo de Oposicao Sindical, Sindicato da Construcao Civil (no address)

(p) Serralheria Nova Copa (Workers'Co-operative) Rua Alberta Rocha 73

(q) SEP (Servico de Educacao Popular) - Rio, Rua Santa Luzia 776,

Sala 1301, Rio de Janeiro, R.J.

(r) FASE - Nacional Rua das Palmeiras 90, botafogo 22270 Rio de Janeiro.

(s) Federagao das Associacoes de Moradores de Sao Joao de Meriti

(t) Associacao de Moradores - Sao Joao de Meriti

(u) Associacao de Moradores de Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro

(v) Associacao de Moradores da Favela- near Leblon, Rio de Janeiro.

APPENDIX 3

Peter Williams

LARGO DA CARIOCA - RIO DE JANEIRO

"Mas a maioria sem nenhum"....
(But the majority has none)

Sergio came from the Couto Magalhaes in the North East six years ago looking for work. He had been a shepherd, but had to give up his farm when the droughts came. Since he arrived in Rio he has had many jobs on and off, but none lately.

Sergio lives under the Carioca Metro station in the heart of the Rio de Janeiro banking district. He lives with his 'family' - a loose-knit group of (currently) four other immigrants also from rural Brazil - Maria from near Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais), another three North Easterners, one from near Aracaja (Sergipe), all with similar histories.

The family shares food, and tonight a bottle of cheap smelling cachaca. But its main function seems to be guarding the group's few posessions - a constant task for the homeless who are otherwise denied belongings except for the clothes they wear. Sergio has no shoes and only ragged trousers and shirt.

The family is surrounded by rubbish, which is their majority source of food and money. By collecting and selling paper, cardboard and tins out of dustbins, Sergio can earn around 2,000 cruzeiros a day (about 40 pence) almost enough to buy beans, rice and flour to live on. He is always hungry, very hungry.

Sergio is pleased to talk, and approving of English trade unionists taking interest in the conditions of the Brazilian poor, but with a simple man's fear of authority and reprisals will not let me take a photograph of him, nor use his real Christian name.